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UNCLAS ADANA 000009

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: OCALAN APPEAL STILL STRONG IN SE

SUBJECT: Pro-Ocalan Sentiment Still Strong in Turkey's Southeast

1. (SBU) On January 18 a Turkish court confined imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan to his cell on Imrali Island for 20 days, and stipulated that his lawyers would not be able to see him during that period, according to our contacts and press reports. The government charged that, during December 12, 2005 meetings with his lawyers, Ocalan issued instructions for Kurds to engage in demonstrations. The lawyers made public the news of Ocalan's confinement. The PKK then publicly announced that Ocalan's confinement was unacceptable, and urged Kurds within and outside Turkey to stage pro-Ocalan demonstrations.

2. (SBU) Local contacts told us that on January 17 in the Sakirpasa district of Adana, about 100 Kurds and members of the Liberal Citizens Movement (a small pro-Kurdish citizens action group in the Cukurova region) demonstrated against Ocalan's confinement as part of a series of similar demonstrations in 14 provinces involving approximately 5000 protestors throughout Turkey's southeast, as reported in the press.

Actions follow regional mayors' assertion that "Ocalan is a reality"

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3. (SBU) On December 15, 2005, regional pro-Kurdish press announced that the 56 mayors in southeast Turkey aligned with DEHAP, including the mayors of larger regional cities, such as Diyarbakir, Batman, Tunceli, Hakkari and Sirnak, joined the ranks of the new Democratic Society Party (DSP) in a Diyarbakir ceremony. In that ceremony the groups' remarks emphasized, among calls for greater Kurdish cultural rights, a call for the GoT to recognize the "reality of (former PKK Abdullah) Ocalan's" continuing strong influence on southeast Turkey's Kurdish population.

4.(U) On December 30, regional press reported that this southeast Turkey mayor's group also sent a letter to Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen to protest calls by the GoT for the cessation of ROJ-TV broadcasts from Denmark. In response to their letter, Turkish deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Gul reportedly criticized the group's protest of the GoT request and the Diyarbakir Prosecutor's office reportedly started an investigation into whether several mayors, including Diyarbakir mayor Osman Baydemir, Tunceli mayor Songul Erol Abdil, and Batman Mayor Huseyin Kalkan., violated Turkish law in making their protest.

5.(U) Regional press reports that the Diyarbakir Prosecutor's Office this week has opened similar investigations against regional DSP mayors regarding their calls for peaceful protests of Ocalan's reported solitary confinement.

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